



February 5, 2010



The data included below comes from the 2009 Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey. The OES is published every year by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. For Washington State, the OES samples 800 detailed occupations across 40,000 firms. This is the best quality and latest data available on this topic. The estimates are based on a rolling survey of employers in Washington State.

Please note that your request asked for both wages and benefits. Unfortunately, this data source does not include employee benefits, and we do not have access to that information.

The overall OES sample size is quite large. It covers approximately 40,000 covered employers in Washington State of the approximate total of 196,900. Like all estimates derived from statistical surveys, there is a margin of error. The margin of error for the entire survey is small due to the large sample size compared to the total number of employers. Therefore our confidence level in this number is high.

For each of the individual occupations, though, especially those with smaller numbers of participants, the margin of error is larger. In some cases the differences listed between private and public sector wage rates listed in the attached table is within the margin of error. Therefore, the differences between private and public sector wage rates are not as stark as reported, so that the tables may overstate the wage differences between the sectors – in either direction.

An additional limitation with the data is that there are approximately 800 occupations in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) definitions. This means the occupations as defined by the SOC are often very broad. Within these relatively broad occupations, it may be that the duties (and skills) of an occupation in the private sector may differ from those in the government sector.

I hope this revised information answers your questions and clears up any misunderstandings from our previous correspondence on this topic. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact me at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Joel Sacks

Joel Sacks, Assistant Commissioner

Data Comparing public and private wage rates

Table 1 on the following page compares certain private and public (local, state and federal) occupations. The table identifies the number of occupations in either the private or public sector with higher pay. It is grouped by the educational level required for the occupations.

The table represents all 594 detailed (6-digit standard occupational classification (SOC)) occupations for which educational preparation levels are available. The column labeled “occupations with no government jobs” displays the number of detailed occupations without government employment. These occupations include many in the sales, manufacturing, and performance areas in which there is no public sector activity.

Note: In the prior version of this document, this column was mislabeled as “Occs. with no private jobs”.

The table lists the number of detailed occupations in which the private sector or the public sector has a higher average hourly wage rate. There is no consideration as to whether or not the differences in hourly wage rates are statistically significant. Said another way, the apparent difference between the wage rates in many occupations is within the margin of error of the survey. The data in this table should therefore be taken as more of an indication than a precise measurement of the relative differences in hourly wage rates at the detailed occupational levels between government and private sector employers.

When reading the table, each horizontal line of the table within an educational level adds up to the total number of occupations in the education level for which information on education preparation levels is available.

For example: under post-baccalaureate preparation and local government, there are a total of 31 occupations for which educational preparation-level information is available. Of this total, there are 12 occupations on the local government line which are only found in the private sector; 10 occupations which are paid higher wages in the private sector in the state; and 9 in which higher wages are paid in the public sector. Each line in the post-baccalaureate section of the table adds up to 31, the total number of occupations for which education preparation level information is available.

Table 1: Private and public occupational wage differences by educational level

Detailed occupations requiring:	Occupations with no government jobs	Private pays more	Government pays more
Post-baccalaureate preparation			
All Government	10	9	12
Local	12	10	9
State	24	6	1
Federal	13	6	12
Baccalaureate preparation	Occupations with no government jobs	Private pays more	Government pays more
All Government	34	51	27
Local	45	38	30
State	73	33	7
Federal	64	16	33
Some college preparation	Occupations with no government jobs	Private pays more	Government pays more
All Government	25	23	32
Local	31	23	26
State	66	8	6
Federal	55	11	14
No college preparation	Occupations with no government jobs	Private pays More	Government pays more
All Government	184	41	187
Local	217	25	130
State	288	43	42
Federal	288	16	69

Source: US Department of Labor, Occupational Employment Statistics survey, 2009

Table 2 shows the average hourly wage rate for a full-time employee in the 22 broad occupational categories for which the department had private and public sector wage rates. The broad occupational categories are based on the two-digit level of SOC (SOC).

The first row summarizes the wage rates for all occupations in the private sector and the public sector. The public sector is divided between federal, state and local government wages. Note that this aggregate comparison may be misleading. There are many detailed occupations in the private sector that have no public sector parallel and many of these occupations pay low wages, resulting in an average figure for private wages well below public sector wages.

The second row in the table summarizes the wage rates for all occupations with employment in both the private and public sectors. Note that there are significant differences between the wage rates at different levels of government. Federal wage rates in Washington State are significantly higher than wages at the state and local level, which has the effect of raising average public wages.

The remaining rows compare wage rates in the broad occupational areas that include both private and public employment.

Table 2: Private and public occupational wages, by 2-digit standard occupational code

	private	local government	state government	federal government
Total all occupations	\$17.03	\$21.92	\$21.36	\$28.16
Total				
All occupations with government employment	\$24.16	\$25.61	\$22.50	\$30.83
<u>Occupational Categories</u> <u>(by 2-digit SOC code)</u>				
Management	\$50.36	\$46.70	\$40.30	\$45.09
Business and Financial Operations	\$30.54	\$31.30	\$24.86	\$31.96
Computer and Mathematical	\$41.27	\$32.17	\$29.73	\$37.11
Architecture and Engineering	\$36.71	\$34.10		\$40.34
Life, Physical, and Social Science	\$32.41	\$30.04		\$29.81
Community and Social Services	\$17.18	\$26.44	\$20.60	\$30.02
Education, Training, and Library	\$17.96	\$22.13	\$24.52	\$25.13
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	\$22.80	\$19.37	\$23.60	\$33.07
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	\$32.39	\$30.80	\$33.05	\$35.01
Healthcare Support	\$13.54	\$15.14	\$16.78	\$17.54
Protective Service	\$13.86	\$30.02	\$18.86	\$27.48
Food Preparation and Serving-Related	\$10.27	\$12.84	\$12.95	\$18.97
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	\$12.01	\$15.98	\$13.63	\$20.75
Personal Care and Service	\$11.53	\$13.24	\$12.86	\$20.42
Sales and Related	\$13.40	\$11.06	\$12.78	\$27.90
Office and Administrative Support	\$15.57	\$18.03	\$15.48	\$23.52
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	\$11.70	\$16.19	\$14.03	\$21.28
Construction and Extraction	\$22.92	\$25.45	\$20.41	\$27.00
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	\$21.12	\$24.11	\$21.11	\$29.09
Production	\$16.15	\$27.03	\$20.68	\$28.36

Source: US Department of Labor, Occupational Employment Statistics survey, 2009